

Spirit of 76

Homeport: San Diego

PCU HIGGINS (DDG-76) NEWSLETTER

Builder: Bath Iron Works

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Captain's Call

By Commander Red Smith, USN
Commanding Officer

Welcome to our first edition of "Spirit of 76," a quarterly newsletter which we hope will keep you informed of our progress as we move toward Commissioning and beyond. I am CDR James L. T. "Red" Smith, USN, and it is my great privilege to serve as HIGGINS' first Captain. HIGGINS is the sixth combatant in which I have served; five have been homeported in San Diego and three have been Aegis ships. The oldest ship I have served in was only three-and-a-half when I reported aboard. Yet this is my first tour as a Plankowner, a member of the commissioning crew (Precom), and my first Arleigh Burke class guided missile destroyer (DDG). About the time we hold our Commissioning ceremony next year, which we hope will be in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, in late April 1999, I will mark the completion of my first 20 years of naval service. I can't wait to see what my next 20 years in the Navy will bring! I could not be happier than to have the opportunity to lead this great crew as we together bring HIGGINS to life and prepare her to join the fleet. My wife Meg, son Andrew, daughter Julia and I look forward to getting to know as many of you as possible in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

It is my hope that as you read the stories by those who will sail in HIGGINS you will get a taste of what life is like as part of Precom crew. By featuring articles written by crewmembers, we hope you will get to know us. The HIGGINS will be the newest and most capable warship in the United States Navy upon Commissioning -- with all the latest technologies -- but the decisive factor in our ability to successfully perform our mission will be the Sailors you will meet in our pages and onboard HIGGINS when you come to visit us. ♣

This is the inaugural edition of the Spirit of 76 Newsletter. It will be distributed through the postal system and via e-mail. If you or someone you know would like to be added to the mailing list, please e-mail

Schwarze_Katherine

[E_ENS@mail.sbath.n](mailto:E_ENS@mail.sbath.navy.mil)

avy.mil or call (619)

556-0821.5



Some Words From Our Sponsor

By Lieutenant Colonel Robin Higgins, USMC (Ret.)
Ship Sponsor

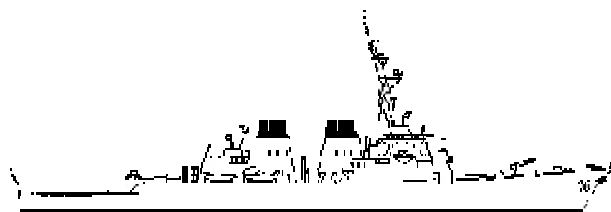
Hi, Shipmates (if you'll permit an "old Marine" to use that term). This is the first of many newsletters to follow, and I'm honored I was given space to write a message to you -- the growing crew of the HIGGINS.

How I wish you all could have been at the launch! On that cold autumn day in Maine, we gave the ship its proud name, and it slid down into the Kennebec and toward years of honor and commitment for our country.

If my husband were here to see it, he would be quite humbled, to say the least. He never thought of himself as much of a hero, and never thought it was important to remember who he was. He always believed that the men and women who worked for him and with him were the real heroes, the young Marines and sailors who gave their all every day, not for much money or much reward, but simply because they thought it was the right thing to do. And maybe some officer would say, "nice job" or maybe "thanks."

I remember lots of stories about your ship's namesake. Perhaps this newsletter would be a good place to share some of them with you periodically. One of the final stories is one a Canadian colleague of his in Lebanon told me about after Rich was captured. Canadian Army Major Vern McKeen told me that Rich knew the dangers of an American traveling in Lebanon, but that he would never shirk from his duty. As the chief of the observer group there, Col. Higgins' responsibility was to ensure the safety of his men, and the only way he knew to do that was to lead from the front. Major McKeen and his wife were so worried about his safety, they gave him some Canadian maple leaf patches and told him he could affix them on top of his American flag patch on his uniform if he got into trouble. That might make him safer. Rich gracefully returned the patches to the McKeens, saying, "With all due respect to you and your country; if I get into trouble, I will do it as an American." And, it appeared, he did.

Thanks for letting me share that story. Take care. Work hard, and I'll see you all soon. ♣



Underway ... Already?

HIGGINS' Sailors Test Their Sea Legs on San Diego-based Destroyers

By Ensign Marty Wallace
Auxiliaries/Electrical Officer

Many Precommissioning Detachment (PCD) HIGGINS (DDG-76) sailors have had the opportunity recently to go underway with several of the Arleigh Burke destroyers stationed in San Diego. Underway opportunities allow the sailors time to familiarize themselves with what USS HIGGINS (DDG-76) will look like.

During the underways sailors are expected to take part in the daily routine of the ship and to work closely with their running mate from the host ship's crew. HIGGINS' crewmembers will face many of the evolutions that are occurring on these destroyers in the not-too-distant future. We have been able to witness an Engineering Certification, tomahawk firing exercises, USW torpedo firing exercises and other various work-ups aboard USS JOHN PAUL JONES (DDG-53), USS FITZGERALD (DDG-62), USS STETHEM (DDG-63), USS BENFOLD (DDG-65) and USS MILIUS (DDG-69). These exercises have allowed our sailors to gain some practical experience as to what may be expected of us when we come to San Diego for our training cycle. Occasionally our sailors are afforded the opportunity to visit foreign ports such as Mazatlan and Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. The crewmembers who made these trips with the USS JOHN PAUL JONES (DDG-53) and the USS STETHEM (DDG-63), respectively, can attest to the awards that going underway can provide (see sidebar).

Another primary focus of getting people underway is working on Personnel Qualification Standards for watchstations. Most of our sailors have never stood underway watches aboard an Arleigh Burke destroyer and need time on station to complete their applicable PQS requirements. With help from our hosts we are able to lessen the load of PQS requirements once crewmembers move up to Maine--where our ships' schedule and the lack of sea-going destroyers will hinder progress.

As HIGGINS sailors we need to hit the deck running and set an example to the destroyers of San Diego of what they should expect of us when we return here next year. We are very appreciative of the support we have received from the other destroyers, and are grateful to the opportunities that they have provided us. ♣

THE STETHEM EXPERIENCE

One Junior Officer Discusses an Educational (but Exhaustive), Trip Aboard DDG-63

By Ensign Eddi Watson
Communications Officer

As a young PCD HIGGINS ensign just arriving aboard USS STETHEM (DDG-63) for temporary active duty, I was full of curiosity about what the following weeks would bring. My first memorable experience of shipboard life was when I had only been onboard for two hours. I was on the bridge wing watching the ship come out of the channel when I got word that I was supposed to be on watch in Combat (Information Center). This watch, 0630-1130, was not bad in itself, but because of the way we rotated, it meant that I had the 0130-0630 watch the following morning. After standing watch I went through another regular workday with STETHEM's Communications Officer. We worked until 2100 and then assumed the duties and responsibilities of the 2130-0130 watch on the bridge. During my first 64 hours onboard, I got six hours of sleep. This was a rude awakening for someone who thought he would just get to know his way around for the first couple of days.

In short, I learned to be ready for the unexpected. Shipboard life is not always as routine as some like to think. However, my time on the USS STETHEM was a great experience and I would do it all again if given the chance. §

AN ADMINISTRATIVE MATTER

By PNC(SW) Ronaldo Rodolfo
Navigation/Administration Department

Reporting to a FIRST duty station can be such an overwhelming undertaking for new sailors. Generally, a new sailor wants to make a very good first impression to his or her command. But to be told, on the first day, where to go, what to do, what to bring, etc., can create such an information overflow on new sailors, that it may give them the wrong message. And that is where the Administration Department comes in. Our basic mission is to provide personnel support to ALL HIGGINS crewmembers, old and new. We are here to make your check-in as smooth as possible. Although we are not yet a fully administrative support office, we will give you the support you need in whatever personnel requirements or personnel concerns you might have. The Admin Department is also your main source of information. So feel free to stop by and we will be more than happy to assist you to the best of our capabilities. If you need an answer, ASK THE QUESTION! ♣

Taking the Oath

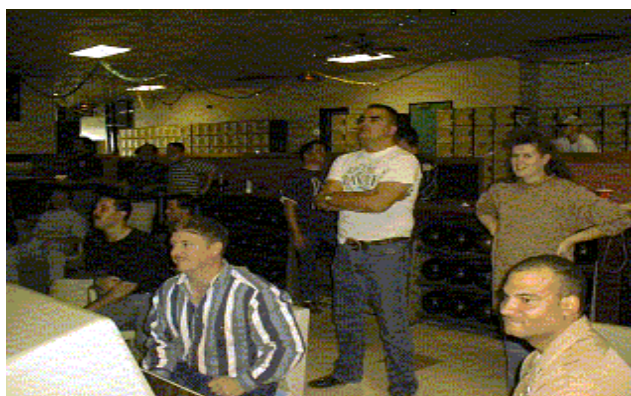
By SK1 Tony Jenkins
Supply Department

The Supply Department is proud to recognize Mess Specialist Chief Petty Officer Norma Lewis who recently reenlisted at Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado. Chief Lewis has served 17 years of service. Her last two assignments have been Leading Chief Petty Officer at the NAB Galley and Leading MS at BRC-30 at North Island, Calif.

Chief Lewis' reenlistment officer was the Assistant Supply Officer of Naval Amphibious Base San Diego. In attendance were NAB Supply Officer; HIGGINS' Executive Officer, LCDR Martin; Command Master Chief, EMCM(SW) Healey; Supply Officer, LT Mathis; and several other members of the HIGGINS crew.

By Ensign Katie Schwarze
Strike Officer

The Combat Systems and Engineering departments would also like to recognize and extend their congratulations to Fire Controlman First Class Terry Smith and Damage Controlman First Class Kimberly Frost, on their recent reenlistments. FC1 Smith reenlisted in Dahlgren, Virginia, on 20 FEB. LT Eric Ver Hage, HIGGINS' Weapons Officer, administered the oath to Petty Officer Smith. DC1 Frost reenlisted 20 April via video teleconference. CDR Smith, located in Bath, administered the oath to her in San Diego. Bravo Zulu, FC1 Smith and DC1 Frost!! ♣



Upper photo: Precommissioning Detachment crewmembers eagerly await the start of a video teleconference between San Diego and Bath.

Lower photo: HIGGINS' sailors test their bowling prowess in San Diego.

Awards and Accolades

HIGGINS sailors have received numerous awards and accolades from commands they have previously served. Below is a list of HIGGINS awards recipients.

Navy Commendation Medal

RMC(SW) Acker
SKC(SW) Martin
PNC(SW) Rodolfo
FC1 Wood

Letter of Commendation

EW2 Cheney
HT1(SW) Kucharik
YN3 Querubin

Letter of Appreciation

GSEC(SW) Durham

Navy Achievement Medal

GSM2(SW) Couture
OS1 Johnson
RM2 Keaton
SK1 Jenkins
GSM1(SW) Jorgenson
EN2 Ramseyer

Good Conduct Medal

ETC Downing (4th)
GSM1(SW) Jorgenson (3rd)
SKC (SW) Martin (3rd)

Honor Graduate

GSE2(SW) Batchelor (Elec. Maintenance Course)

Master Chief's Corner

By EMCM(SW) Doug Healey
Command Master Chief

Greetings from San Diego! A hearty "Welcome Aboard" to all HIGGINS family and friends. Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Master Chief Electrician's Mate (Surface Warfare) Douglas W. Healey, HIGGINS' Command Master Chief. The Command Master Chief is the senior enlisted crewmember and the Commanding Officer's advisor for enlisted matters. I have 24 years service in our Navy and HIGGINS is my third consecutive Command Master Chief tour. My previous tours were as Command Master Chief for the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado, Calif., from May 1994 to July 1997; prior to that I served as Command Master Chief in USS FOX (CG-33) from January 1992 until FOX's decommissioning in April 1994.

Assignment to precommissioning duty is a unique experience that each sailor will remember for the rest of his or her life. While HIGGINS is in a precommissioning status, the primary duty for the crew is to train to prepare to operate the ship at its fullest capabilities. As the time to take possession of the ship and sail away from the shipyard approaches, our work tempo will increase. If you have questions regarding HIGGINS or crew-related matters, please contact me. I can be reached at (619) 556-9956, or by e-mail at Healey_Douglas_W_EMCM@mail.sbnath.navy.mil.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

HIGGINS Web Page: www.higgins.navy.mil

Robin Higgins' Web Page:
www.quartznet.com/higgins/ship.htm

PCD HIGGINS Admin (San Diego): (619) 556-9935

PCU HIGGINS Admin (Bath): (207) 442-5105

Command Master Chief: (619) 556-9956

Ship Store: (619) 556-0364 / (207) 442-5131

The Ship Store is Open for Business!

By Ensign Brie Gallagher
Disbursing Officer

The Ship's Store is on its way! Currently the Supply Department has been working diligently to start an Auxiliary Resale Outlet in San Diego and Bath which will accommodate not only the needs of our sailors, but the needs of the whole HIGGINS family. We will have T-shirts and sweatshirts with your choice of either an embroidered Ship's Crest or Ship Silhouette. They are offered in a variety of colors: tees in red, navy, white, gray, green and tan; sweatshirts in blue, gray, green, and burgundy. Also, we will have polos with the Ship's Crest available in many colors and styles including Navy Blue and Gold, Green/White/Navy, Navy, and Smoky Teal. We will also have baseball jackets with gray bodies and colored sleeves. Patches are available and the command ballcap is in the final production stage. We will all be very satisfied with the final product! Customer service is very important to us. We would like to make you happy, so if you would like to order something we have in the store or ask about whether we can place a special order for you, please pick up the phone. §

The Detachment Supply Department Number is (619) 556-0364 or ENS Brie Gallagher, the Ship's Store Officer, can be reached at (207) 442-5131 or by e-mail:



SHIP STORE PRICE LIST

Shirts and Sweatshirts are available in M, L, XL, 2XL

Hanes T-shirt (ship or crest)	\$10, \$11 (2XL)
*Red, Blue, Gray, Tan, Green, White	
Sweatshirt (ship or crest)	\$22, \$24 (2XL)
*Green, Gray, Burgundy, Blue	
Mock Turtleneck (crest)	\$13, \$15 (2XL)
*Blue, Green	
Polo (striped - call for colors and sizes)	\$25
Polo (deluxe - call for colors and sizes)	\$29
Baseball Jackets (L/XL)	\$37
Ballcaps	\$7, \$9 (CDR), \$10 (ADM)
HIGGINS Patches	\$3